

Irene Collins was a fiery, dedicated, and very determined lady, who never stopped giving of herself to her community, be it helping troubled teenagers or supporting numerous civic activities and community causes. This special lady is survived by her four siblings; six children; seventeen grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren. May all who knew her and are terribly saddened by the loss of Irene take comfort in the kindness of her enduring works, which constitute the finest and truest tribute to her.

COMMENDING WHITKO HIGH
SCHOOL ART STUDENTS

HON. MARK E. SOUDER

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 11, 2004

Mr. SOUDER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commend the artistic achievements of 15 students at Whitko High School in South Whitley, Indiana. Whitko High School was one of 18 schools in the United States that recently participated in the 34th World School Children's Art Exhibition in the Republic of China, Taipei. The purpose of the exhibition is to promote mutual understanding and friendship among the younger generation of the world.

It is a tremendous honor for Whitko High School students to be recognized for their artistic abilities on an international level, especially considering nearly 40 countries were represented at the exhibition.

I'd now like to recognize by name each of the fifteen Whitko students who received the international award medals: Hannah Brennenman, Mark Harness, Jessica Cripe, Kristine Rotach, Rebecca Morford, Kayla Green, Adam Porter, Tasia Boggs, Angie Roberts, Lisa Wilkinson, Katie Menzie, Jana Rowland, Dana Sellers, Emily Crist, and Hillary Lacy. Each of these students has demonstrated outstanding artistic skill and talent by being recognized in the World School Children's Art Exhibition, and I applaud them for their fine work.

I also commend Whitko High School's art teacher Walter C. Malicki for his dedication and enthusiasm for developing the artistic abilities of Whitko students. Over the past several years, Whitko High School students have received 32 national and 95 international awards. These honors are due, in large part, to the leadership of Mr. Malicki and his encouragement of each student's artistic abilities.

Once again, I extend my congratulations to the Whitko High School art students for their achievements in the 34th World School Children's Art Exhibition. Keep up the good work.

RECOGNIZING THE CONTRIBUTIONS
OF HEATHER TAYLOR-MIESLE

HON. HILDA L. SOLIS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 11, 2004

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Heather Taylor-Miesle, a dedicated and passionate young woman who has worked in my office as a Legislative Assistant handling

environmental and transportation issues for nearly three years.

Heather was instrumental in shepherding into law a bill that is important to my community and close to my heart—the San Gabriel Valley Watershed Act (Public Law 108–65). Signed into law on July 1, 2003, the bill implements a study that will investigate how to preserve green, open and recreational space in the San Gabriel Valley Watershed in Los Angeles County. This law will go a long way towards ensuring environmental justice for the community I represent—one that is often the victim of environmental blight, rather than the beneficiary of environmental good fortune.

Heather is a proud environmental advocate who constantly pushes to ensure that the health and well-being of people remains at the top of the environmental agenda. She has worked with the local cities I represent to focus on cleaning up polluted Superfund sites and assessing the health risks of dust emitted by local gravel mining pits.

As Heather leaves the office to pursue a new professional opportunity, I wish her, her husband Don, and son Isaiah the best of luck. Her warm personality and friendly demeanor will be greatly missed.

“CHAVEZ’S DISRESPECT FOR
DEMOCRACY”

HON. BARNEY FRANK

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 11, 2004

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, last week I released a statement expressing my disappointment with the use by Venezuela's National Electoral Council (CNE) of hyper-technical points and controversial procedural rulings to repress what appears to be the clear will of a sufficient number of Venezuelan citizens to move the country to a constitutional referendum on President Chavez.

The Organization of American States and the Carter Center observed first hand the democratic spirit shown by Venezuelans during the signature collection process, and they have publicly stated that they saw no significant problems with the collection of signatures.

Both organizations have also said they disagree with the Chavez-dominated electoral board's decision to set aside 876,000 signatures unless citizens come forward to validate them because the large numbers involved here, and the short time period allowed in which to appeal these signatures, could frustrate the will of the Venezuelan people to have a referendum on their president.

Because the decision of the CNE seems to me likely to obstruct the constitutional referendum process, I am submitting into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD a recent editorial from The Washington Post entitled “Coup by Technicality” which provides specific details on the decision.

I think it is also important that President Chavez understand that if the will of the Venezuelan people is disregarded, the international community will appropriately blame him, as the country's leader, for contributing, through his rhetoric and actions, to such a profoundly anti-democratic outcome.

[From the Washington Post, March 5, 2004]

COUP BY TECHNICALITY

LATE LAST YEAR 3,448,747 of Venezuela's 24 million citizens turned out in just four days to sign petitions calling for a recall referendum on President Hugo Chavez. This extraordinary civic exercise, monitored by observers from the Organization of American States and the Carter Center, offered a democratic solution to years of political conflict in that important oil-producing nation—trouble that threatened to push Venezuela into dictatorship or civil war. Now Mr. Chavez, whose crackpot populism and authoritarian methods provoked the crisis, blatantly seeks to stop the vote, in violation of his commitment to both the OAS and his own constitution. His actions have already prompted a new wave of unrest across the country, including demonstrations in which at least seven people have been killed. Unless he can be restrained, Mr. Chavez may complete his destruction of one of Latin America's most enduring democracies.

Though the constitution, drawn up under Mr. Chavez's own administration, requires 20 percent of all voters to back a referendum, opposition groups collected 1 million signatures more than should have been needed for the recall vote. These signatures were rigorously audited by a nonpartisan civic group before being forwarded to the electoral commission. Yet, after delaying its response for weeks, the commission, dominated by Mr. Chavez's supporters, rejected 1.6 million of them, or nearly half the total. To do so, it invented requirements that didn't previously exist. Most notably, it threw out 876,000 signatures, each accompanied by a thumbprint, because someone other than the voter had entered registration details on the petition.

Mr. Chavez's functionaries subsequently announced that they would give about a million of those stricken from the list a chance to restore their names—but only if they appear in a limited number of registration centers during one two-day period. In practice, that poses a next-to-impossible logistical challenge to the opposition, even if there were no harassment from Mr. Chavez's police and civilian goon squads. But attempts by the foreign mediators to reverse this Kafkaesque coup have so far been unsuccessful.

Mr. Chavez, who has built a strong alliance with Cuba's Fidel Castro and imported thousands of Cuban personnel, appears eager for a domestic and international confrontation. Last weekend he called President Bush an “illegitimate” president, referred to him with a vulgar epithet and threatened to cut off oil supplies to the United States. Opposition leaders say that more than 300 people have been arrested in recent days, and that some have been tortured. Given the Bush administration's weak position in the region, hope for a peaceful or democratic solution rests mostly with Venezuela's Latin American neighbors, starting with Brazil. If Mr. Chavez continues to deny his people a democratic vote, leaders from those nations must be prepared to invoke the Democracy Charter of the OAS and threaten him with the isolation reserved for autocrats.

IN MEMORY OF THE LATE JOHN
MICHAEL “MIKE” SEGER

HON. JON C. PORTER

OF NEVADA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 11, 2004

Mr. PORTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to mourn the loss of John Michael “Mike” Seger.